

Dear readers,

Here is the new and already the 18th issue of the journal Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe (RASCEE), which this year features thematically and methodologically diverse contributions on religious, social, and political processes in Central and Eastern Europe. In this issue we are publishing three research articles which successfully passed the peer-review process and make up an exceptionally rich issue that also opens up new areas of discussion in regional religious studies.

The first article, "Wounded Collective Identity in Europe: Trauma, Religiosity, Modernization and Visions of the Future," by the team of authors Tamás László, András Máté-Tóth, Miklós Gyorgyovich and Bernadett Balassa, relies on the theoretical framework of "wounded collective identity" (WCI) and represents the first comprehensive empirical test of this theory on a sample of 38 European countries. The authors show that the experience of historical injustices, geopolitical vulnerability, and traumatic narratives remains a key element of social self-understanding in many countries, especially in regions marked by historical "in-between spaces" between East and West. The study also raises important questions about the relationship between religiosity, secularisation, and social cohesion.

The second article, "Rethinking the Churches' Place in Society: The Parliamentary Debate on Church Property Restitution in the Czech Republic," by Filip Fila, is more focused on the one national case study. In his article he provides a thorough thematic analysis of the parliamentary debate on the restitution of church property in the Czech Republic. Although it was expected that religion would be the focal point of the political conflict, the analysis shows that finance, legal procedures, and the relationship between the state and religious communities predominated in public debate. The article enables a better understanding of the specific Czech combination of secularity, historical identity tensions, and contemporary political dynamics, as well as of the way in which the place of religion in a distinctly "non-church" or "non-religious" society is publicly negotiated.

The third article, "Towards Autocephaly: Challenges Faced by the Latvian Orthodox Church," by Juris Jefuni and Anita Stasulane, analyses the historical and contemporary challenges in defining the canonical status of the Latvian Orthodox Church. Of particular note is its relationship to the Moscow Patriarchate, which became especially relevant after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The authors reconstruct the development of the search for autocephaly from the early 20th century to the present, showing how geopolitical and security contexts shape internal church processes and legal transformations.

This issue also includes two book reviews on contemporary research on religion in Central and Eastern Europe. The first review focuses on the book edited by Regina Polak, Aybiçe Tosun and Ansgar Jödicke entitled *Religious and Non-Religious Narratives on Migration: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, and the second review is devoted to the book edited by Frank Cibulka and Zachary T. Irwin entitled *Liberals, Conservatives, and Mavericks. On Christian Churches of Eastern Europe since 1980. A Festschrift to Sabrina P Ramet*.

At a time when Europe and the world are undergoing profound social, political, and technological changes, religion remains an extremely important analytical tool for understanding contemporary processes. Therefore, the aim of our journal, to reflect on religion and society in Central and Eastern Europe from a critical, interdisciplinary, and empirically-based perspective, is perhaps more relevant today than ever. We hope that the articles in this issue will contribute to a better understanding of the role

of religion as a dynamic and complex social phenomenon that continues to shape European societies, their past, present, and possible futures.

In addition, our goal is to offer readers insight into current theoretical, methodological, and social debates that shape the field of religious studies in the region. We hope that this issue of RASCEE will also stimulate new questions, comparative research, and further deepen the understanding of the relationship between religion and society in Central and Eastern Europe.

This year's issue which you can read now was prepared by a new editorial team, with Marija Pinal Villanueva providing significant support to the editors-in-chief in her role as managing editor and Dinka Jerolimov Marinović compiling the book review section. This is also the last issue prepared under the current ISORECEA executive committee. We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to ISORECEA President Gergely Rosta, who, before taking up the position of ISORECEA President, was also the editor-in-chief and a long-time supporter of the RASCEE journal.

We wish you stimulating reading and inspiring research!

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